



Integration Groups as Spiritual Practice²³⁷

We are calling a circle and invite you to join us.
 We yearn for a safe space within which to be authentic,
 trusting, caring and open to change.²³⁸

Throughout *Quest*, the monthly integration groups are a powerful opportunity for group spiritual practice. They differ in process and serve different needs than the ongoing spiritual practice groups, where the focus is on a specific form of practice. They also differ from the one-to-one mentor relationships and from the discussion groups that change with each retreat. In the integration groups, participants and facilitators meet with a consistent group of “spiritual friends” for deeper exploration of all aspects of the *Quest* experience in a supportive and predictable process and setting.

Careful attention has been given to the design of the integration groups with an invitation to move from the outside “busy” world into a slower paced, contemplative one, allowing the mind to quiet and the heart to open. There are opportunities throughout the integration group to connect more fully with the self and with others on the journey. The group closes each session in a way that supports bringing together the experience the group shared and moving with fluidity into the day-to-day individual life experiences. This process of opening, exploring, and closing is a sacred and spiritual one. The predictability and routine of the integration group flow creates ease and comfort, so that participants and facilitators alike can rest gently in that comfort as they explore and stretch.

Since the membership of the integration groups remains stable throughout the *Quest* program, relationships among members have the opportunity to grow, offer

237. The development of the integration group owes much to the work of Parker J. Palmer as presented in *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2004) and to Charles Garfield, Cindy Spring, and Sedonia Cahill, *Wisdom Circles: A Guide to Self Discovery and Community Building in Small Groups* (New York: Hyperion, 1998).

238. Charles Garfield, et al., *Wisdom Circles*, 5.

